

Savage weather moving up coast also hinders flights, closes schools

From preceding page

lice to direct traffic in front of the municipal building and said PSE&G turned the lights back on about a half-hour later.

Fairfield police reported roof damage in the industrial section along Gloria Lane, Audrey Place and Kulick Road.

In Linden, the tornado wreaked its greatest damage at Linden Motor Freight on Lower Road.

High winds ripped off more than a third of the roofing on the 35,000-square-foot, six-building complex, co-owner Louis Salz said.

He said no one was injured, adding a meeting that had been scheduled there was moved to Edison.

Several cars and trucks were damaged by the collapsed walls. Throughout the remaining sections of the roof, hundreds of holes were punched through the ceiling by flying steel and pipe.

The storm whooshed through shortly after noon and "sounded like incoming artillery," said Salz, a Vietnam war veteran. He said more than \$500,000 in damage was caused in 30 seconds.

Just before the winds struck, tractor-trailer driver Clark Mitchell was waiting to make a delivery of chemical drums to Linden Motor Freight.

"I was afraid my truck would turn over," he said.

"That was the closest I've ever been to a tornado. I don't want to get this close again."

John Thomas was eating lunch in a construction trailer not far from the Linden Motor Freight warehouse when he looked out the window.

"I saw that funnel cut right across the field," said Thomas, who was delivering a load of logs from New Egypt in Ocean County. "The trailer started rattling and shaking and I got out," he said.

As Thomas made a dash for his rig, the tornado lifted and flipped the construction trailer upside down, flattening it.

"I don't need any more shocks like that," Thomas said.

In the Somerset County community of Green Brook, Route 22 was closed in both directions for a half-hour and natural gas service to several businesses along the highway near the Washington Avenue intersection was

shut off as a result of a downed power line that ignited an underground gas main, police said.

No injuries were reported, but extensive traffic delays occurred in both directions after a 30,000-volt power line stretching across the highway snapped, hit and charged a ground cable affixed to a utility pole, causing the gas main to rupture, authorities said.

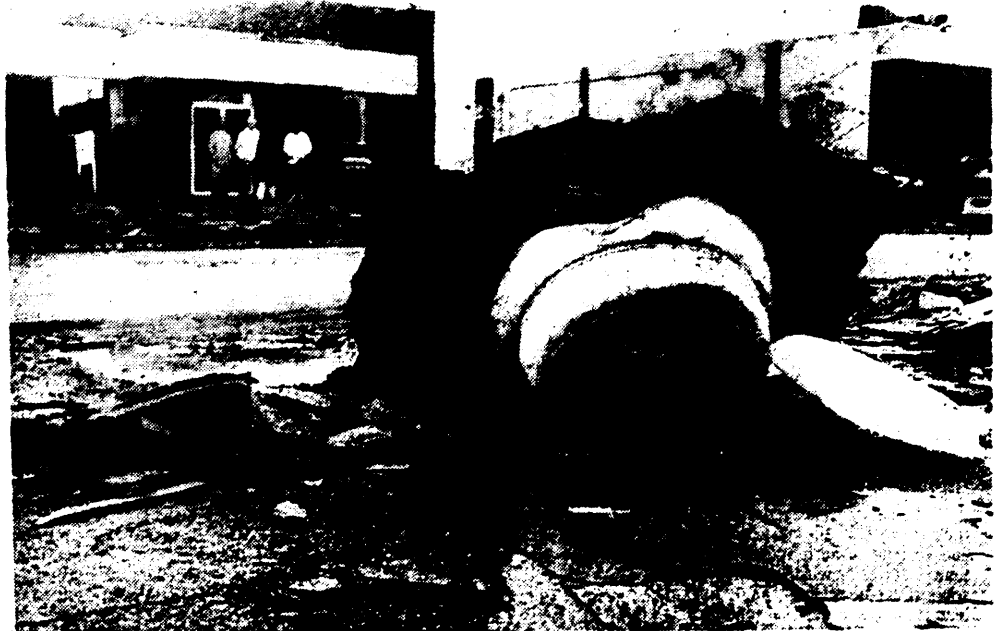
The eastbound lanes of Route 22 were reopened about 12:30. Westbound traffic was diverted south on Washington Avenue to Route 28 in Dunellen until the westbound lanes were reopened at 1:45 p.m.

On nearby Greenbrook Road, a tree blocked both lanes of traffic, forcing the closure of the street between Madison Avenue and Warrenville Road, police said. Traffic was diverted until the road was reopened at 6 o'clock.

In North Plainfield, a transformer blew in front of the Greenbrook Gardens apartment complex, authorities said. Traffic was stalled as a result.

Electrical power was knocked out to more than 1,300 PSE&G customers in North Plainfield and Green Brook, spokesman Brown said.

Somerset County's Duke Island Park in Bridgewater was closed when



A section of the roof of the Baxter Rubber Co. in Fairfield lies across the street from the plant in the wake of the storm

high winds swept through and ripped up trees and caused other damage, police said.

Bridgewater Lt. Edwin Legge said the chief park ranger ordered the park closed until at least Monday because of

storm-related damage.

The storm also ripped a portion of the roof of the Huffman-Koos furniture store on Route 22 in Bridgewater, Legge said.

The wind claimed a roof and did

other damage in Branchburg, ripping the top off a shed on Stony Brook Road and knocking out power in Branchburg for several hours, police said. Road crews were kept busy removing trees toppled by the storm, several in the village of Neshanic Station.

Branchburg police were forced to man the traffic light at Old York Road and Route 202, after the central portion of the township lost power for three hours. There were no accidents reported at the busy intersection.

In Hunterdon County, trees and utility lines were downed by high winds that whipped through in mid-morning, mostly in the southern half of the county.

In Frenchtown, elementary school students were dismissed about noon on the recommendation of the fire department. Across Harrison Street, a JCP&L pole snapped at its base at about 11 a.m. and was swaying in the wind, still attached to the wires, according to Sgt. Al Kurylka. The pole, which carried a transformer, was near propane tanks at the Frenchtown Ceramic Co., he said.

A large tree damaged a brand new pickup truck parked on Eighth Street, and a tree 20 inches in diameter crashed on Milford Road.

Delaware Township police reported severe damage on Sam Waisem-pacher's farm on Dunkard Church Road at about the same time. Sgt. Bruce Mast said roofs were blown off two barns and a third barn was lifted off its foundation. Four hay wagons were blown about 75 feet and a cinder block wall of another barn was knocked down, he said. No one was injured.

Delaware Township students were dismissed early because of parent-teacher conferences, but the conferences were canceled because of the weather. Superintendent Thomas Smith Jr. said. Superintendent's afternoon program for preschool handicapped children also was canceled.

South Hunterdon High School in West Amwell lost its electrical power about noon and operated on a backup generator the rest of the day, Principal Louis Piccolo said.

The Reading municipal building was closed due to a power outage. The police department operated on emergency lights and battery backups for telephones until about 3:30 p.m., Lt. Walter Stepanchuk said.

The two intersections of Route 22 with Route 523 in Whitehouse Station were closed to cross-traffic after the traffic lights went out. Through traffic was detoured to median crossovers east and west of the intersections. Businesses and stores in the area also lost power, and some banks closed early, Stepanchuk said.

In Morris County, police reported a small tornado touched down in Jefferson, knocking down trees, damaging power lines and closing Route 181. Power outages also were reported in the Milton section, as downed trees and power lines forced police to divert traffic from Ridge Road until about 6 p.m.

Strong winds ripped through a small portion of East Hanover just off Route 10 near the Livingston border, downing trees, ripping a portion of the roof off the Tops Appliance City store and damaging the adjacent Castle Ridge Townhomes development.

The winds tore through the area at about 12:05 p.m., damaging the store roof, ripping out skylights and causing a gas leak, according to officials, who immediately evacuated some 100 customers. Portions of the roof and skylights were carried about 100 yards into the townhouse development, causing broken windows and minor structural damage.

Roofing panels also were scattered throughout the neighborhood. "It got very dark, very windy... and then there was a roar and the windows started shaking," said Bill Thomas, operations manager of Tops Appliance City. "It came up 1, 2, 3 and then it was over, just like that."

Scott Rosenbaum, construction supervisor at Castle Ridge, said he was in his office when the winds struck.

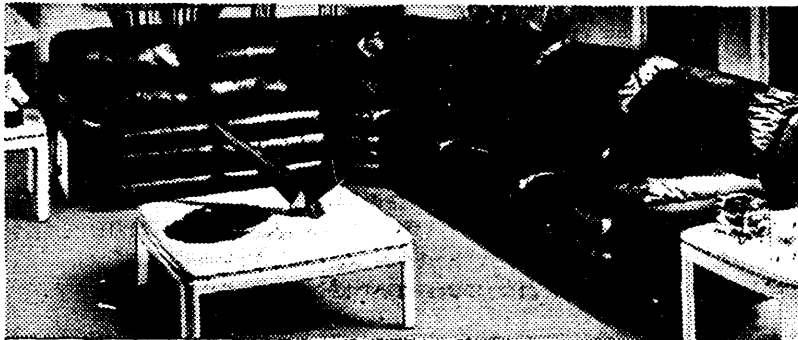
"It came all of a sudden; there was no warning," said Rosenbaum. "Sheets of rain came... and strong winds. You could see roof shingles flying everywhere. People came running out of their homes screaming and crying."

Police along the Morris County

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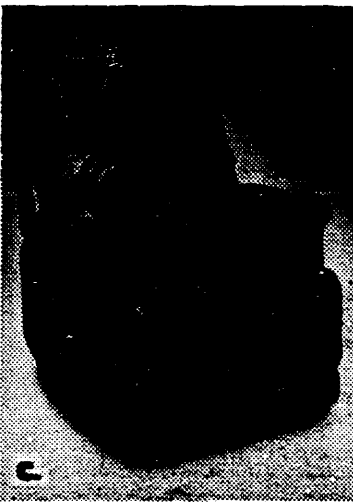
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